



## Imagining Tomorrow's Colorado State Workforce

BY TROY A. EID  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DPA

What do we want Colorado's state workforce to look like a decade from now?

We must dare to imagine better times ahead, even when today's budget challenges threaten to distract us. As Colorado's largest employer, the State has an obligation to plan both for the current *and* future needs of nearly 70,000 full- and part-time employees scattered across 64 counties.

The legislative process, with its heavy emphasis on annual budget cycles, puts a premium on identifying and addressing the shorter-term needs of the Colorado state workforce. This is of course necessary and appropriate. Yet all three branches of state government – the General Assembly, the Governor and his cabinet, and the Judiciary – should also develop a shared vision for tomorrow's state workforce, along with a set of mutually reinforcing strategies and policies to help get us there.

### Trends shaping our workforce

Three major trends will shape Colorado's state workforce in the months and years ahead: Massive upcoming state retirements; a systematic failure to retain younger employees; and a constitutionally frozen civil service system that prevents employees from getting the tools they need to do their jobs and manage their careers.

#### 1.) An unprecedented number of experienced employees will retire from state service during the next several years.

Like most other States as well as the federal government, Colorado's state workforce grew most rapidly in the 1970s and early 1980s, during an era in which government at all levels tended to grow more rapidly than the rest of the economy. As a result, Colorado now has a "retirement bubble" of employees who joined the state workforce during those years and who will retire soon. *Roughly 40*

*percent of the State's entire workforce will retire during the next seven years.* In some parts of State government, that retirement rate will exceed 50 percent.

The inevitable prospect of large-scale retirements presents a real challenge to the State in terms of "succession-planning," the process of attracting and retaining those employees who will take the reins from those who retire. The State's responsibility as an employer is to develop systems and training that capture at least some of the "knowledge base" that will otherwise walk out the door when these veteran state employees decide to leave. This is never an easy task, even in the best of times, but will be made even more difficult by the sheer magnitude of the personnel shift that will soon take place.

#### 2.) A record number of younger employees are leaving the state workforce after only a few years of service.

During the past five years or so, something significant has happened to Colorado's state workforce: *The State is no longer able to retain newer and typically younger employees for more than an average of three years.* This development has two potentially far-reaching consequences.

First, the employees who are leaving the workforce are in many cases those men and women who the State needs desperately to retain: the higher performers who, like those who have gone before them, would otherwise be expected to rise over time to leadership positions throughout the state system. When asked why they are *Please see WORKFORCE, p. 2*

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### **WORKFORCE, from p. 1**

abandoning the state workforce for jobs elsewhere, departing employees typically cite one decisive factor: The State's failure to provide a "total compensation" package that includes health-insurance benefits, as well as salary and performance pay adjustments, that are competitive with other comparable employers.

Ironically, this systematic failure to retain younger employees undercuts the State's ability to offer more affordable insurance rates to those who remain in our workforce.

*The average age of Colorado's classified state workforce is now 46 years old – apparently an all-time record. This is substantially older than would have been predicted even with the "retirement bubble" discussed above. Because insurance is the business of spreading risk over a group of employees, a relatively older pool means higher rates for everyone.*

There will probably always be at least some younger people eager for state jobs. But that's not the point. The point is this: Is the State of Colorado really serious about attracting and retaining the *right* people for tomorrow's workforce? Do we just want to fill vacancies? Or should we be committed to recruiting and keeping men and women of the same quality and potential as the top performers in our current workforce?

If we are indeed serious about the future, we must understand the reasons why many of our best younger employees are leaving – the State's comparatively small health insurance benefit looming by far the largest of all – and do something about it. A middle-income state employee on one of our health plans (excluding Kaiser) currently spends nearly 10 percent of his or her entire after-tax monthly paycheck on health insurance coverage. *Unless the State's total compensation system is reformed, that amount will rise to nearly one-third of employees' monthly income by 2005.*

### **3.) Colorado's constitutionally frozen civil service system is failing to provide our employees with the tools they need to do their jobs.**

Added to the State Constitution in 1918, Colorado's civil service system was largely designed to replace a politically motivated "spoils system" in state politics with a merit system to protect employees' employment rights through competitive examinations. In these two respects, the current system serves Colorado well. The spoils system deserves its place on the ash heap of history. Hiring civil service employees competitively, based on real qualifications instead of political connections, is in the enduring interest of employees and taxpayers alike.

Yet many other aspects of our constitutionally frozen

civil service system are hurting the very employees they are supposed to help. The nation's most stringent prohibitions against privatization, for instance, mean that Colorado state employees now lack many of the basic tools they need to perform their jobs and will for the foreseeable future.

As a result, many of the basic computer systems state employees depend on daily – systems covering everything from employment records and human resources information to financial management, payroll and accounting – outlived their useful life expectancy years or even decades ago, with no plan or realistic possibility for replacement even in robust budget years. Contrast Colorado's neglect of basic electronic infrastructure with many other States, which have already outsourced these tools to private companies whose business it is to constantly maintain and upgrade their system capabilities.

In other states, employees routinely log on to check their personal benefits portfolio (such as training records, accumulated leave time and retirement). Newer employees to Colorado's workforce are stunned that the State lacks such basic a system. What is even more shocking is that the State has no plan to develop such capabilities. Our constitutional restrictions against privatization, which usually prevent outsourcing of functions that state employees have traditionally performed, make it all but impossible to finance such improvements. As an employer, this is just one more self-inflicted competitive disadvantage that will hamper the State in the years ahead unless we reform our civil service system.

Last year, the State of Florida moved to outsource and modernize many of its financial and human resources systems. This added millions of dollars of private investment to the current and future needs of the state workforce. The relatively few state employees affected by this outsourcing agreement had the choice of joining the private contractor or being reassigned within Florida's civil service system at equal or higher salaries. This reform has earned high marks from citizens as well as state employees who finally have modern electronic tools to do their jobs and track their own careers.

If Colorado voters agree, our state Constitution could be amended to bring the same benefits to state employees here. The only thing that could possibly distract us is fear – a fear to use our imagination to build a civil service system that is finally worthy of Colorado state employees in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

***As Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Personnel & Administration, Troy A. Eid is the chief administrative officer for Colorado's \$13.6 billion state government.***

# LETTERS

Dear Troy:

This is a letter of appreciation for the assistance provided by Larry Friedberg, State Architect, Director, State Buildings and Real Estate Programs. As you may recall, I was Vice President for Business and Finance from 1986 through the beginning of 2002.

On October 21, 2002 Fort Lewis College dedicated the new Education Business Hall. The success of this project is in large part due to the support received from Larry. He provided essential guidance early in the process of determining how to resolve multiple code, occupancy and systems problems with Hesperus Hall, the structure that the new facility replaced. Based on his recommendations we undertook an evaluation of the cost to correct the deficiencies of Hesperus Hall versus the cost to construct a new building. Based on that evaluation the College submitted a request for capital construction funding that was approved.

Largely due to the commitment and support provided by Larry, the College is completing the installation of a master fire alarm system that provides a modem system in all general fund buildings. The College allocated auxiliary funds to extend the system throughout all of the residence halls and apartments. The installation of the fire alarm system in both general and auxiliary funded facilities has provided a margin of safety that is important in protecting property and lives.

Larry has provided assistance and thoughtful guidance to us over a number of years. When you are here to present your Lifelong Learning series lecture, I would like to show you the results of the years of effort and dedication of Mr. Freidberg.

Sincerely,

Robert Dolphin  
President  
Fort Lewis College



Dear Troy:

The Board of Directors of the Denver Hispanic Chamber of Commerce has just returned from its annual strategic planning retreat. It was a huge success by all accounts.

My purpose in writing is to express my gratitude on behalf of the entire Board for the use of your staff trainer, Mark Leyba. Mark spent several hours in advance of the retreat interviewing each board member to become more familiar with each individual and to identify key issues. He then consulted with me on development of the program and together, we created a very full agenda. The board met for approximately two days and Mark was very disciplined and methodical about guiding us through our agenda.

We have a very dynamic group as most of us are entrepreneurs and run successful businesses. We are also faced with many tough issues in our goal to be the premier Hispanic business advocacy organization in Denver. Mark was extremely professional and set the tone for each of us to contribute. The result was the foundation of a detailed plan to refine and improve our infrastructure and manage our anticipated growth. Many of the comments at the end of the session reflected this being the best retreat we have ever had.

As a non-profit organization, our resources are very limited. In the past, we have had to forego a professional facilitator because their hourly rates were not conducive to our budget. Having one this year, particularly with Mark's skills and commitment to the Hispanic community, truly helped make the difference. His commitment to the people on our board was evident as well as his willingness to do this all on his own time was an extraordinary gesture.

I would like to share with you some of the exciting new initiatives and ideas that resulted from our retreat. Perhaps we can arrange a time to meet in the near future. In the meantime, let me just say thanks for your continued support of the DHCC, its mission and its members.

Sincerely,

Salvador Gomez, Chair  
Denver Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

## December Employee of the Month: Robert Abeyta

Capitol Complex's Robert Abeyta is the kind of worker who is able to take an idea, develop a plan, and successfully implement it. And as a result, he has been able to help us resolve various safety issues. The following examples are typical of Robert's ingenuity in solving problems outside the area of his job responsibilities.

Robert helped resolve a potential safety issue with the cannons in front of the Capitol. There was concern about the cannons being pushed down the front steps. The chains were mounted onto eyebolts embedded into the rock however the eyebolts were bent and giving way. Robert took a simple idea of chaulkblocks for the wheels and designed some that not only work but also do not interfere with the historical look of the cannons. This idea saved money and time, keeps citizens safe, and preserves a historical resource of the State of Colorado.

Robert also addressed issues with the Annex dock area. The metal along the edge of the driveway was falling apart and coming loose. Instead of calling a contractor to fix the problem, Robert assessed the situation, ordered supplies, and began the work. Robert saved at least \$1,200 by doing it in-house.

Thanks to Robert he has made a difference, making this a safer place to work and for the citizens and vendors to conduct business in a safe environment.



*Troy was able to lure Robert to his office with a work request. Robert was very surprised when Troy presented him with the award rather than pictures to hang.*

Other nominees include: Laverne Gonzales of DOAH; the DFP "Lead with Our Ears" Team: **Sandy DiMatteo, Linda Bradley, Dennis Palamet, Victoria Trujillo, Bonnie Speer, John Cisneros,** and **Carol Lieber** who created a presentation on the state of communication in their division. The DHR Financial Services team: **Barbara Baskin, Michele Carroll,** and **Judy Giovanni** who worked long hours during the financial close period. **Chris Block** of DoIT who made tremendous contributions to the plan to revamp the Disaster Recovery Plan. **Perry Madison** of the EO for consistently providing high quality customer service.

## KUDOS

**Anne Huth** of Central Payroll received a note of appreciation from Kathy Newell of the Attorney General's Office for providing a paycheck, on a very short turnaround, for an employee that was moving out of state.

**Gil Lopez and the Quick Copy Crew** received kudos from MaryLou Padilla for consistently getting the

CMHIFL newsletter out in the requested timeframe.

**Sherri Fuss** of Mail Services was complemented on meeting a difficult time schedule for getting 8,000 letters mailed on a specific deadline. Annmarie Picarello of the Colorado Student Obligation Bond Authority was impressed that Sherri came through even though she was presented with many obstacles.

## PERSONNEL CHANGES

### New Employees:

Lawrence Wegrzyn, DCS  
Adeline Gutierrez, DCS  
Jill Elggren, DCS  
Linda Janowski, DCS  
Jerry Armijo, DCS

### Transfers In:

Steven Zitzmann, EO

### Promotions:

Denise Martinez, EO, to Accounting Tech III  
Peter VanRonk, DFP to General Prof. IV  
Paula Cortese, DOAH, to Admin Asst. II  
John Sandoval, DOAH, to Admin Asst II  
Lyles Vernon, DoIT, to Computer Operator I  
Susan Kubec, DHR, to Gen Prof. IV

### Departures:

Gabriel Saindon, DCS



# PEACE ON EARTH

BY PAUL FARLEY

With the approach of the holidays, I wanted to write something uplifting and poignant for the season. But lacking Troy's gift for inspirational prose, I thought I would tell the remarkable tale told in *Silent Night: The Story of the World War I Christmas Truce* by Stanley Weintraub.

In August 1914 almost all of Europe went to war. The German army quickly drove through Belgium, but bogged down outside of Paris. Both sides began to dig in, and what had been thought would be a short fight became the nightmare of trench warfare:

"Cold rain had muddied and even flooded many trenches, and decomposing bodies floated to the surface. Unless soldiers moved about, they would sink into the liquefying mud, and many slept erect if they could, leaning against the dripping trench walls. It was a stomach-churning

atmosphere for eating one's rations. Sand-filled sacks hung from ceilings not always successfully keeping food from the reach of rats. Men deloused themselves by sizzling lice in the flame of a candle while others not so fortunate blew on their hands, seized rifles, and ascended for sentry duty."

In most places the opposing lines were only 100 to 200 feet apart – close enough that insults as well as shots could be hurled across the "no man's land" in between. As fall turned to winter, the mud gave way to ice and snow which, aside from the bitter cold, was actually something of an improvement.

The British, French, and German governments each tried to provide some Christmas cheer to their troops. Each British soldier received a small brass box containing tobacco and a greeting card, along with plum pudding and candies. French troops received a wide array of gifts resulting from a government-sponsored donation drive. The German government sent their men cigars – and thousands of small fir trees.

As evening fell on December 24, soldiers on both sides attended Christmas eve services, sometimes improvising altars in the rubble of destroyed churches and monasteries. Later that night, Allied troops noticed that

the Germans had begun putting dozens of small fir trees atop their trenches, and illuminating them with candles and lanterns. And then they could hear through the crisp air German soldiers singing "Silent Night," sometimes in German, sometimes in English. Moved by this, the British soldiers began singing back. The back-and-forth went on for some time, interrupted by applause, laughter – but not by gunfire.

There was a heavy overnight frost, and the surface of the ground was frozen. In the early dawn of December 25, Allied soldiers peering through the cold mist covering the battlefield could see crude signs that the Germans had put up: "Merry Christmas" and "You no shoot, we no shoot." Then, slowly, brave and trusting German soldiers began climbing out of their trenches and walking across the no man's land armed only with wine,

chocolates, and cigarettes. Cautiously, Allied soldiers did the same, and before long hundreds of men from both sides were standing together talking (mainly in English). They agreed upon a short cease-fire so that each side could bury their dead scattered across the battlefield,



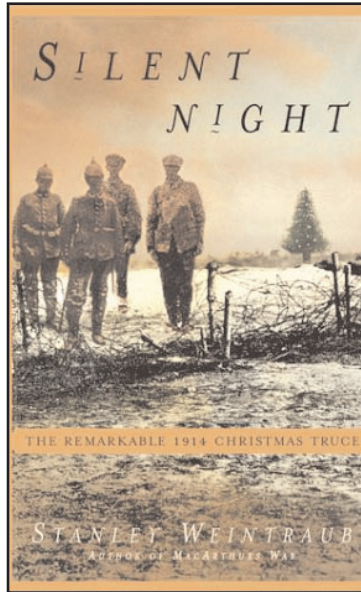
some of whom had fallen days or weeks earlier. The two armies began to intermingle, helping each other recover bodies and dig graves. This gruesome work took most of the morning. At the same time, they chatted, traded various items of smoke, drink, and uniform insignia, and shared family pictures.

Around noon, a Scottish chaplain approached the German lines and suggested they conduct a joint memorial service for all of those killed. Joined by a German soldier who had been studying at a seminary before the war, the chaplain opened with Psalm 23, and prayers followed in both languages. Afterwards, the good-natured exchanges continued with British troops offering plum puddings and other sweets, and the Germans at one point rolling barrels of beer across to their erstwhile enemies. Later in the afternoon, friendly soccer matches occurred spontaneously all along the front. Most of the front-line officers on both sides either pretended not to notice what was going on, or even participated in it. Unsurprisingly, when the generals at the high command heard about it, word came down that any soldier "found guilty of holding a conversation with the enemy would be court-martialed and shot for treason." Angry orders were issued for fighting to resume immediately.

*Please see PEACE ON EARTH, p. 6*

And it did – sort of. The next day was a British holiday closely related to Christmas (Boxing Day, see below), as well as a major religious observance in Germany (St. Stephen's Day), so in many places men on both sides deliberately shot high over the heads of opposing troops, or even warned them to keep down. The weather also turned bad for about a week, making it difficult to mount any kind of attack. In addition, combat units were routinely rotated in and out of the front lines, and by New Year's Day, many of the troops who had participated in the truce had been reassigned. Any hope of a permanent cease-fire vanished, and at several points, opposing officers stood and saluted one another before returning to their trenches to recommence fighting. Military commanders on both sides made sure there was no repeat of the Christmas Truce of 1914.

In his book, Stanley Weintraub speculates on the many "what ifs" that might have occurred had the truce held. Certainly the some eight million soldiers who lost their lives over the next four years would have lived. Quite likely, the Russian Empire would not have been weakened and destroyed, and there would have been no communist revolution, no Stalinist purges, no Cold War. And Germany, not crippled by the war, would have retained its economy and monarchy, meaning a psychotic failed painter named Adolf Hitler would likely have remained obscure and powerless. All because opposing troops, sharing a common bond and faith, spontaneously decided to lay down their arms. It would have been a Christmas miracle unlike any seen in nineteen centuries.



**THIS AND THAT:**

- The British holiday "Boxing Day" is a by-product of the English class system. In the 1840s, the upper class family Christmas had become so crowded with churchgoing, feasting, visiting, and gift-giving that it was not possible for their servants to have a holiday. And so they created a second, lesser "Christmas" for service workers, who each received a "Christmas Box" for the day.

## A SEASON OF GIVING

BY RANDI BLATT  
C-SEAP DIRECTOR

It's that time of year again: a time to remember those less fortunate, a time to give in ways that make a difference, a time to count our blessings. Thanks to the generosity of the Colorado State Employee's Credit Union (CSECU), C-SEAP is able to offer food and financial assistance to state employees in need, especially during the holiday season. Every year, CSECU sponsors a food drive during the months of November and December in order to collect non-perishable food items for the C-SEAP Food Bank as well as monetary donations for the C-SEAP Emergency Fund. (The Emergency Fund does not receive state funding and relies solely on donations.) Please take the time to drop off non-perishable foods or monetary contributions to any of the eleven CSECU office locations between now and December 18<sup>th</sup>. Many state worksites have collection points as well. Look for the bright red bins! Needed items include: macaroni and cheese, cereal, canned pasta, tuna fish, soup, pasta, rice, canned fruit/vegetables, peanut butter, and baby food. Toiletries and laundry soap are needed as well. Super market gift certificates are also a terrific way to provide food and allow the recipient to choose what they need most.

During the past year, C-SEAP has provided food and money to over 500 state employee families. Some lost their homes due to Colorado wildfires; some were confronted with unexpected medical expenses; others were faced with choosing between paying their electric bills and feeding their children. In one case, the mother of four children left a severely abusive relationship, relocated her family, and managed to keep her job with C-SEAP's help. The program provided enough food for three weeks; a generous check to help pay for rent; supportive counseling; and consultation with the employee's supervisor regarding ways to help keep this employee safe at work. C-SEAP received a note from one of the children saying, "Thank you for helping our Mom."

For more information, please contact the Colorado State Employee's Credit Union (CSECU) at **303-832-4816** or **1-800-444-4816** or the Colorado State Employee Assistance Program (C-SEAP) at **303-866-4314** or **1-800-821-8154**.

Happy Holidays!

